A VINDICATION OF *God's Moral Character*, AS TO The Cauſe and Origin of EVIL, both Natural and Moral.

WHEREIN

The Caſe of Liberty and Neceſſity is conſidered, with regard to Human Actions.

In a LETTER to a FRIEND.

By THO. CHUBB.

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A VINDICATION OF *God's Moral Character.*

In a LETTER to a Friend.

SIR,

I RECEIVED your kind Letter, in which you were pleas'd to expreſs your Diſſatisfaction, with regard to what I have ſaid concerning *God's moral Character.* You ſay you have read my *Previous Queſtion*, and the *Supplement* to it: but it ſtill remains to you a *doubtful Caſe*; and the Ground of this Doubt, you ſay, is the *E-*

vil which takes place in the World: and accordingly, you reaſon thus, If God is all-knowing and almighty, and if he is in reality ſuch a wiſe and good Being, as I have endeavour'd to prove him to be; then it might reaſonably be expected, that he would *prevent Evil*, by preventing the Exiſtence of every thing which leads to it, or is any way the *Cauſe* of it. But ſay you, the contrary to this is evident in Fact, and that therefore it ſtill remains a *doubtful Point*, whether God is in reality a wiſe and a good Being, or not.

I SHALL be glad if I can offer any thing which may be effectual to remove this *Difficulty*, and give you *Satisfaction* in the Caſe. The Sum of what you have urg'd may, I think, be fitly expreſſed in the following Queſtion; namely, That if God is in reality a wiſe and a good Being, from whence does this Evil proceed? But,

BEFORE I return an Anſwer to this Queſtion, I beg leave to obſerve, That as the propoſing my *Previous Queſtion* to publick Conſideration, has drawn on me the delightful Imployment, of vindicating the *moral Character* of *Almighty God*: and as this is a point of the utmoſt Importance; ſo I thought it proper, in order to compleat that Work, and thereby to cloſe up this Subject, *Firſt*, To lay before my Reader the ſeveral kinds of Evidence, upon which the

the Truth and Certainty of God's moral Character may be ſuppos'd to depend; or by which he may be proved to be a wiſe and a good Being, *&c.* *Secondly*, To vindicate that Character, as to the Cauſe and Origin of *Evil*, both natural and moral; by anſwering the Queſtion now before me. And, *Thirdly*, To improve the whole, to ſerve the Purpoſes of *Virtue* and *true Goodneſs*; by repreſenting to my Reader, what it is which will render him truly *lovely* and *valuable* in himſelf, and truly *acceptable* and *well-pleaſing* to God.

BUT before I proceed, I ſhall make one or two previous Obſervations; and accordingly I obſerve,

FIRST, That Actions take their Denomination of *Good* or *Evil*, from the Good or Evil they are *productive* of, from the good or evil *Intention* of the Actor; or from the good or evil *Motive* or *Principle* they ſpring from; and which is the Ground or Reaſon of them. So that an Action may be good in one Reſpect, and evil in another. As thus,

ONE Man may intend to kill another, and that very Action which was deſign'd to procure the Man's Death, may be the Means of preſerving his Life. In this Caſe the Action is *good*, with regard to its Effect; Life is preſerv'd by it, but it is evil with reſpect to the Deſign of the Actor, in as much as Death

Death was intended. Yea, an Action may be good in both theſe Reſpects, and yet be evil with regard to the Motive or Principle it ſprings from: As thus,

ONE Man relieves another in Diſtreſs, with an intent to miniſter that Relief; and he does this, not becauſe it is right and fit in the nature of Things, and out of Pity to the diſtreſs'd; but only, that he may render himſelf capable of doing ſome *greater Miſchief*, when a proper Occaſion offers. In this Caſe the Action is good, with regard to its *Effect*, the diſtreſſed Perſon is relieved; and it is good, with reſpect to what was *immediately intended* by the Actor, *viz.* He intended to miniſter that Relief: But it is evil, with regard to the *Motive* or *Principle* it ſprang from, and which was the *Ground* or *Reaſon* of it. And,

AS Actions take their Denomination of Good or Evil, upon the different Accounts above mention'd; ſo it is the latter of theſe, in which the *Morality* or *Immorality* of the Action is concern'd. An Action may be good, with regard to its Effect, and the Actor may intend, that that good Effect ſhould be produc'd by it, (as in the Inſtance above) and yet that Action would be evil, in a *moral* Senſe, if the Motive or Principle it ſprang from, was evil and vicious. Again I obſerve,

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, That Virtue or Goodneſs comes under a two-fold Conſideration, *viz. Abſolute*, and *Relative*.

BY abſolute, I mean Virtue or Goodneſs conſider'd *abſtractedly*, or that which has an *intrinſick Goodneſs* in it, when conſider'd ſimply in it ſelf; and which does not derive its Virtuouſneſs from its *Relation* to any other thing. Virtue or Goodneſs, conſider'd as abſolute, is reducible into a very narrow Compaſs, conſiſting only in one ſingle Point; namely, in the *communicating Happineſs* to the ſuitable Subjects of it; or in the endeavouring to do it, by doing or avoiding what appears to be proper for the Attainment of that End; from a Senſe of the *Fitneſs* of ſuch a Temper and Conduct. This is Goodneſs it ſelf, or what is ſuch conſider'd abſtractedly; it not deriving its Virtuouſneſs from its Relation to any other Thing.

BY relative Virtue, I mean that which derives its Virtuouſneſs from its *Relation* to *Goodneſs*, that is, from its Relation to what is abſolutely Good and Virtuous, (as above explain'd.) Virtue or Goodneſs under this Conſideration, is more extenſive, and includes in it, *Truth*, *Juſtice*, *Temperance*, and the like. Theſe, as they derive their Virtuouſneſs from their Relation to Goodneſs; ſo there are Circumſtances which will change their Nature, and make them otherwiſe:

wiſe: that is to ſay, tho the Practice of theſe, in almoſt every Inſtance, tends to the common Good; yet there may be ſome poſſible Caſes, in which it may be otherwiſe.

HAVING made the above Obſervations, I ſhall now proceed to what I propos'd; namely,

FIRST, To lay before my Reader the *ſeveral kinds of Evidence*, upon which the Truth of God's moral Character may be ſuppos'd to depend. And all the Proof which this Point is capable of, may, I think, be rang'd under theſe three Heads, *viz. Firſt*, Divine Teſtimony: *Secondly*, Experience and Obſervation: And, *Thirdly*, The Nature and Reaſon of Things. The Proof which each of theſe afford, I ſhall conſider diſtinctly. And,

FIRST, I am to enquire, what Proof *Divine Teſtimony* affords, or can afford, with regard to the grand Queſtion now before us. And in order to ſet this Matter in a true Light, I will ſuppoſe a Perſon upon the enquiry, whether God is in reality a *wiſe* and a *good* Being, *&c.* I will likewiſe conſider him, as ſeeking for Satisfaction from *Divine Revelation*; and that therein he finds God teſtifying of himſelf, that he is really wiſe and good, as aforeſaid. I ſay, ſuppoſing as before, yet *this alone* does not prove the Point; becauſe in this Caſe here

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is another Point taken for granted; *viz.* That *God will not deceive:* which Point muſt not be preſumed, but proved. For as the Idea of *Veracity*, is not directly contained in the Idea of *neceſſary Exiſtence*; ſo if God, or the neceſſary exiſtent Being, may deceive, then his Teſtimony alone is no *certain Proof* in the Caſe.

SO that, before any Thing, and conſequently the Point in queſtion, can be proved from *Divine Revelation*; this Point muſt firſt be proved, *viz.* That *God will not deceive*, at leaſt in all thoſe Caſes, in which the Truth of the Revelation is for our *Advantage*, and the diſappointing our Truſt would be to our *Loſs:* I ſay, the Nature of the Thing requires, that we have a well-grounded Aſſurance, that God will not deceive us, in any of thoſe Caſes; before we can have any juſt Ground of *Confidence*, in any Thing which he has revealed. Again,

SUPPOSE the fore-mentioned Perſon carries his Enquiry farther, and examines, whether God is a *God of Truth*, and conſequently, whether his Teſtimony may be *abſolutely relied upon*, in this, or in any other Caſe; and ſuppoſe he ſeeks for Satisfaction from *Divine Revelation* as before, and that therein he finds God teſtifying of himſelf, that he will not *deceive*, nor *impoſe* upon his Creatures: yet this, and conſequently

ſequently the fore-mentioned Point, is not proved by it; there being juſt the ſame Ground of *Uncertainty* as before. Here is a Perſon, witneſſing for himſelf, that he will not deceive: but whether he will, or no, is ſtill the Queſtion; becauſe he may deceive in this, as well as in any other Caſe; here being no more than his own Teſtimony concerning himſelf; which *Teſtimony alone*, in the Nature of the Thing, is not a proper Foundation for *Credit*, nor a ſufficient Ground of *Certainty*. And this brings me to conſider,

SECONDLY, What Proof *Experience*, and *Obſervation* afford, in the Caſe under Conſideration. And theſe, ſo far as we are capable of judging from them, bear their Teſtimony that God is a wiſe, and a good Being, *&c.* Whoever takes a View of the Creation, cannot but ſee the Marks of *Wiſdom*, and *Goodneſs*, that run thro' the whole. This is abundantly evident to all thoſe, who are qualified to examine, and look into the Works of Nature. The late Diſcoverys that have been made, in *Aſtronomy*, *Anatomy*, and all the Parts of *Natural Philoſophy*, abundantly ſatisfy the Curious and Inquiſitive, that God has in all his Works, *wiſely* exerciſed his natural Propertys, to ſerve the Purpoſes of *Benevolence*.

BUT then, it muſt be remember'd, that the practiſing an Action, which is productive of *real Good*, and the frequent Repetition of ſuch Actions, are not certain Signs of a *moral Property*; (that is, that thoſe Actions proceed from a Principle of true Goodneſs:) becauſe the Ground, or Reaſon of them may be not a *moral Motive*, but ſome other Caſe; ſeeing God may, with regard to his natural Liberty, act from arbitrary Pleaſure, or from vain-Glory, that he may have the empty Praiſe of his Creatures, and the like. And conſequently, tho the repeated Inſtances of God's performing Actions, that are productive of much Good, and the want of an Inſtance of his ever practiſing the contrary, are a *ſtrong Preſumption*, and make it *highly probable*, that ſuch a moral Property takes place in him; yet theſe alone do not amount to an *abſolute Proof*, that it certainly is ſo; becauſe the Action, tho ever ſo often repeated, is not ſufficient to diſcover the *Motive* it proceeded from. And this leads me to enquire,

THIRDLY, What Proof the *Nature of Things* afford, in order to evince the Truth and Certainty of the Point in queſtion. And here I muſt beg leave to reaſſume the Argument which I have already laid down, (both in my *Previous Queſtion*, and in my *Supplement* to it;) and repreſent it

more at large, for the *fuller Eſtabliſhment* of the preſent Propoſition.

THAT God is, and what he is with regard to his natural Propertys, I ſhall not enquire into, nor enter upon the Proof of; but ſhall take it for granted, that God is, and that he is neceſſarily an Immenſe, Eternal, All-knowing, All-powerful, a Self-ſufficient, and an Unchangeable Being.

THIS being allowed, from hence it will follow, that as God is always capable of doing what is moſt *worthy* and *valuable* in itſelf, and which in the Nature of Things, is *right*, *good*, *beſt* and *fitteſt* to be done; ſeeing he knows wherein the Goodneſs, Fitneſs, and Valuableneſs of every Action lies: ſo he *always will act thus*; becauſe right, good, fit, *&c.* are ſo very beautiful, and excellent in themſelves; and are ſo preferable in the Nature of Things, to their Contrarys, that they always will afford a *proper* and a *ſufficient Motive* to influence the Divine Will, and conſequently to direct God's Actions, in all his Dealings with his Creatures; ſeeing he cannot poſſibly have any *Self-Intereſt* to miſlead him, and therefore cannot poſſibly be under a Temptation to act otherwiſe. And

THUS I prove, that God will always exerciſe his *natural Propertys*, (*viz.* his Knowledg and Power) to ſerve the Purpoſes of *Benevolence*. For as God cannot but

but know, from the Nature of the Thing, that the communicating of Happineſs, in the moſt proper Way, is proſecuting the *moſt noble* and *valuable End*, which his natural Propertys are capable of proſecuting, and attaining; ſo this will always be a *Reaſon*, or *Motive* ſtrong enough to induce him, when he does act, to exerciſe his Knowledg and Power in ſerving theſe Purpoſes; and will always ſecure him from proſecuting their Contrarys. And

THUS, from the Nature of Things, I prove God to be a *God of Truth*, who will not deceive us with a Lye. For tho God can have no Intereſt of his own to ſerve, in any Revelation that he makes to his Creatures; and conſequently, can have no *Excitement* from *Self-Intereſt*, to reveal either Truth, or Falſhood; yet, thoſe to whom he gives a Revelation, are capable of being *intereſted in it*; and when that is the Caſe, then the Nature of the Thing requires, or makes it fit, that they ſhould be dealt *fairly*, and *candidly* with: and conſequently, there is a moral Unfitneſs in *deceiving them*; it being a deceiving them to their hurt. And as Truth in *ſuch a Caſe* is right, and fit, and highly preferable to Deceit, and Falſhood; ſo this will always diſpoſe ſuch a Being as God is, to prefer the former to the latter, and to govern his Actions accordingly; ſeeing he cannot poſſi-

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bly be under a Temptation, from any other Motive, to act otherwiſe. And

THUS I prove, that God governs his Actions by the Principles of Reaſon. By which I mean, that God in his Dealings with his Creatures, with regard to what he requires from, and diſpenſes to them, whether in a way of Favour or Diſpleaſure; does not act arbitrarily, or from mere Will and Pleaſure, but on the contrary, he makes the Reaſon of Things the Rule, and Meaſure of his Actions. He has a regard to the *moral Fitneſs* of what he requires; and to the *Suitableneſs* of the *Subjects*, to whom his Corrections, and his Favours are diſpenſed.

TO command what is *fit* and *ſuitable* for a wiſe and good Being to command, and what is *proper* for Creatures conſtituted, circumſtanced, and related as we are, to be in the Practice of; is ſo *right*, and *agreeable* in itſelf, and ſo *preferable* to its contrary, that God will be diſpoſed, from the Reaſon of the Thing, to make it the *Rule*, and *Meaſure* of his Authority. Whereas, on the other ſide, to be arbitrary in his Government, and thereby to act the Part of a *weak* and *childiſh*, or of an *evil* and *vicious* Being; is ſo *mean* and *diſreputable*, that God will upon that account, be at the fartheſt Diſtance from it. Again,

TO

TO love and value, to hate and deſpiſe *arbitrarily*, either Perſons, or Things, without regarding the *Suitableneſs* or the *Unſuitableneſs* of the Perſons, or the Things themſelves; or on the other hand, to love and value, what is *truly lovely* and *valuable* in itſelf, and to hate and deſpiſe what is *really diſagreeable* in the Nature of Things; the latter of theſe is ſo right and fit, and ſo preferable to the former, that God will be diſpoſed upon that account, to make it the *Rule* and *Meaſure* of his Actions. Thus again,

TO reward, and puniſh *arbitrarily*, without making the *Fitneſs* of Things, and the *Suitableneſs* of the Subjects, the Rule, and Meaſure of ſuch Diſpenſations; or on the other hand, to reward and puniſh according to the *Rules* of *Reaſon*; that is, according as Creatures have made themſelves, by their perſonal Vertuouſneſs or Viciouſneſs, more or leſs, the ſuitable and proper Objects of his Approbation or Diſlike: The latter of theſe is ſo *right* and *fit* in itſelf, and ſo *preferable* to the former, that God will be diſpoſed, from the Reaſon of the Thing, to make it the *Rule* and *Meaſure* of his Actions.

FROM what I have ſaid, I think, it plainly appears, that the *Nature of Things* evidently, and certainly proves God to be a *wiſe*, and *good Being*; who prudently exerciſes

exerciſes his natural Propertys, to ſerve the Purpoſes of *Benevolence*; and that he governs his Actions, by the Principles of *Reaſon*.

THE Sum of the Evidence in ſhort is this, namely, That as a *right uſe* and *Application* of Knowledg and Power, to ſerve the Purpoſes of Kindneſs and Benevolence; and as acting by the *Rules* of *Reaſon*, are truly *valuable* and *excellent* in themſelves, and *highly preferable* in the Nature of the Thing to their Contrarys; ſo, ſuch a Being as God is, who has independently in himſelf, all Knowledg and Power, and therefore perfectly knows the *moral* Difference betwixt theſe, and is at *Liberty* (with regard to every other Being, and with regard to any natural or phyſical Neceſſity) for the Choice of either of theſe, and has no Self-Intereſt to *miſlead* him; he will, from the Nature of the Thing, be diſpoſed to prefer in his Choice, a *right uſe* of his natural Propertys, and a *rational* Conduct, before their Contrarys.

HAVING thus examined the ſeveral Kinds of Evidence, upon which the *Truth* of God's moral Character may be ſuppoſed to depend; and thereby proved at large, that God is in reality a *wiſe*, and a *good Being*, &c. I now proceed,

SECONDLY, To vindicate that Character, as to the *Cauſe* and *Origin* of

Evil, by returning an Anſwer to the grand Queſtion now in Debate; namely, That if God is in reality a wiſe and good Being, *from whence then does Evil proceed?*

TO which I anſwer, That this poſſibly is a Knot that is more eaſily *cut* than *untied*: And tho no Man could be able to give a ſatisfactory Anſwer to this Queſtion, yet that would not *weaken* the Evidence, which I have produced; much leſs would it prove God to be *otherwiſe*, than what I have endeavour'd to prove him to be; becauſe the Difficulty in this Caſe may not ariſe from the State of Things, but from the *Weakneſs* of our Underſtandings, and the *Shortneſs* of our Knowledg, which render us uncapable of ſeeing *thro'*, and to the *End* of them.

THE Evil that is in the World, is uſually diſtinguiſh'd into two ſorts; namely, *Natural* and *Moral*.

AS to natural Evil, this is occaſioned partly by the *Follys* and *Vices* of Men; partly by *Superſtition*, and other like Cauſes; with which God is not in the leaſt concern'd, and therefore it cannot, with any colour of *Juſtice*, be put to his Account. And

AS to all thoſe Evils which are the Conſequence of the *natural Frame* and *Conſtitution* of the *World*; theſe plainly appear to be the Effect and Produce of *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*. For tho particular Perſons

are accidentally Sufferers by theſe Means, yet the *Good* of the *Whole* is proſecuted, and carried on by them. Thus,

STORMS and Tempeſts accidentally become the occaſion of much Evil to *many Individuals*; and yet theſe are *neceſſary*, as they *rarify* the *Air*, and thereby render this Planet a convenient Habitation for a multitude of Creatures, whom God hath provided to taſte plentifully of his *Goodneſs* upon it; and as the removing the *Cauſe* of theſe Diſorders, would *introduce* more Evil upon the *whole*, than is introduced by the Diſorders themſelves. And,

AS to Pain itſelf, which perhaps conſtitutes the ſtrongeſt Part of the Objection, our being *liable* to it poſſibly is *neceſſary*, in order to render us *capable* of taſting the Pleaſures of Life. Pain and ſenſible Pleaſure, for any thing we can ſee to the contrary, are ſo *connected* (if I may ſo ſpeak) in the Nature of Things, that we cannot be *capable* of the one, but we muſt be *liable* to the other. That very Capacity we have to taſte the Pleaſures of Life, renders us capable of their contrarys.

BESIDES, Pain in the Nature of the Thing, is highly neceſſary, as it is the great *Guard* and *Security* of Life. If the refraining from Food, or the being wounded, or bruiſed, or the touching of Fire, or the like, did not *give Pain*, then Life and Health,

and all the Enjoyments ariſing from them, would be guardleſs. Men would be perpetually running into Danger, were they not under ſome ſenſible Reſtraint; and therefore Pain is wiſely provided to be a Guard and a Security from it. So that,

NATURAL Evil, as far as God is concern'd in the Production of it, is the Effect of *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*. It is true, God might if he pleaſed, have prevented this ſort of Evil; but then he would have prevented himſelf from exerciſing that *Kindneſs* and *Benevolence*, which he has ſo plentifully diſpenſed thro' the World. But,

POSSIBLY, it may be thought, that the *great Difficulty* is ſtill behind: for tho that Good which is in the World, could not take place in the preſent ſtate of Things, without giving *occaſion* for the Evils aforeſaid; yet this at beſt, is but doing that which is productive *partly* of *good*, and *partly* of *evil*. Whereas if God be ſuch a wiſe and good Being, and be indued with ſuch Knowledg and Power as is here ſuppoſed; then he would take care ſo to act, as that Evil ſhould not be the *neceſſary Conſequence* of *his Productions*; becauſe Evil is the ſame in itſelf, and is as fit to be *avoided* or *prevented*, whether it be produced by accident or deſign; ſeeing ſuch Accidents are ſuppoſed to be foreſeen.

TO which it may be replied; This Objection is founded upon a Suppoſition, that it is *poſſible in the Nature of Things*, for God to give us thoſe Pleaſures we here enjoy, without our being *any way liable* to their Contrarys. Whereas, this may poſſibly be a Miſtake; and till it be made good, the Objection will be of no force.

BESIDES, there is a *ſtrong Preſumption*, that what is ſuppoſed in the Objection, is not the Caſe. For as God will be diſpoſed, from the moral Fitneſs of the Thing, to diſpenſe his Favours to his Creatures in ſuch a way as will *moſt effectually* contribute to their Happineſs: And as the giving us Pleaſures in a way, wherein we are not liable to their Contrarys, (ſuppoſing ſuch a thing can be) *ſeems more likely* to anſwer that End, than giving them in the way he now does; ſo this makes it *highly probable*, that it is not poſſible in the Nature of Things, for us to *taſte* thoſe Pleaſures, without our being *liable* to their Contrarys; ſeeing they are given in a way, in which we are capable of ſuffering all the Evils we at preſent are liable to. And,

THO I would by no means take upon me, *abſolutely* to determine what is, or is not poſſible in the Nature of Things; yet with regard to the preſent Queſtion, I beg leave to offer what follows.

HAPPINESS and Miſery are not only diſtinguiſhed from, but are uſually conſidered as oppoſite and contrary to each other. By Happineſs I mean *Pleaſure* and *Delight*; that is, the happy Perſon is pleaſed and delighted. And by Miſery I mean, *Uneaſineſs* and *Grief*; that is, the miſerable Perſon is uneaſy and grieved.

THE Happineſs which Mankind are here capable of enjoying, or at leaſt, which *Nature* leads them to; may, I think, be rang'd under theſe three Heads, *viz. Senſible*, *Intellectual*, and *Moral*.

BY ſenſible Happineſs, I mean that Pleaſure and Delight which ariſes from the Enjoyment of *ſenſible Objects*: With regard to which I have already obſerved, that the Capacity we have for taſting thoſe Pleaſures, renders us capable of their Contrarys. And to ſay in this Caſe, that it is poſſible for Things to be ſo diſpoſed, as that we may be *capable* of ſuch Pleaſures, without our being *any way liable* to their Contrarys, is to preſume a Point, without any thing in Reaſon or Experience to ſupport it.

BY intellectual Happineſs, I mean that Pleaſure which ariſes from the *Diſcovery* and *Contemplation* of *Truth*: With regard to which I have this to obſerve, that all the Pleaſures we taſte of this kind, are owing either to our *preceding Ignorance*, to the *Care* and *Pains* we take in the diſcovery of Truth,

Truth, or to the *Degree* of our Knowledg, when we attain to *a greater Meaſure* than other Men. All Truth, when conſider'd ſeparate from theſe, is alike as Truth, (tho not of the like Importance to us) the Object of the Underſtanding, and as ſuch it muſt afford the ſame Delight. If we all could with equal eaſe and clearneſs ſee all the Relations of Things, they muſt all, in the Nature of the Thing, equally affect us. We ſhould taſte as much Pleaſure in knowing or contemplating that two and two make four, as in knowing or contemplating any Propoſition which now appears the *moſt difficult*, and ſo affords the moſt Pleaſure; or rather, we ſhould not have Pleaſure from any of them. Now if this be the Caſe, then it is evident that the *Capacity* we have for taſting this kind of Pleaſure, renders us *capable* of its contrary. We could not be delighted in the Diſcovery or Contemplation of Truth, if we were not capable of being ignorant, and of the Unhappineſs which ariſes from it.

BY Moral Happineſs, I mean that Pleaſure and Delight which ariſes from the *Love* and *Practice* of *Vertue* or *Goodneſs*. This Pleaſure, as it is the moſt noble and excellent in its Nature, and as it is what Mankind ſeems deſign'd to taſte upon this Globe; ſo it is the moſt permanent and durable. Other Pleaſures drop in the Enjoyment, and the *indulging* them to any great degree deſtroys

ſtroys them; but this kind of Pleaſure, the more it is indulged, the more it increaſes: and yet, *Goodneſs* cannot take place, without *indigent Objects* for it to be exerciſed upon; and conſequently the Suppoſition of *moral Happineſs* with regard to us, ſuppoſes likewiſe a *poſſibility* of *Vice* and *Miſery*.

IF there are any other ways of being happy, than thoſe I have been conſidering, theſe, I imagine, will appear to have their *Allay*, like thoſe above-mentioned; that is, we cannot be capable of ſuch Pleaſures, without our being liable to their Contrarys.

THUS I have in ſome meaſure vindicated the *Goodneſs* of *God*, by anſwering what is urged againſt it from *natural Evil*; and have ſhewn, that if God had prevented it, he would have prevented himſelf from exerciſing his Goodneſs and Loving-kindneſs in that way, in which he now gives Pleaſure and Delight to his Creatures.

AS to moral Evil, this poſſibly may be reducible into a much narrower Compaſs, than it is uſually thought to be. For as there are many Things that are *eſteemed vertuous*, which have no *moral Goodneſs* or *Vertuouſneſs* in them; ſo there are many other Things that are *eſteemed vicious*, which have no *moral Turpitude* or *Viciouſneſs* in them. And,

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AS to that which properly conſtitutes *Vice*, or *moral Evil*; this is occaſioned by that *Liberty* and *Freedom* of action, which God, by conſtituting us *moral Agents*, has rendered us capable of. By Liberty in this Caſe, I mean, that every Man has *power* to act, or to refrain from acting, *agreeably* with, or *contrary* to any Motive that preſents, without being *conſtrained* to it by any ſovereign Power or Agent whatever.

MAN is a compound Being, conſiſting partly of *Underſtanding*, partly of *Appetite*, of *Affection*, &c. And each Part of this Compoſition affords a diſtinct kind of *Motive*, or *Excitement* to action, or to refrain from acting. And thus a Man is excicited to act, or to refrain from acting; ſometimes from a Motive ariſing from one Part of his Compoſition, ſometimes from another, and ſometimes from ſeveral Motives ariſing from ſeveral Parts of that Compoſition. And,

THO Motive is *neceſſary* to Action, ſeeing the active Faculty will not be exerted without ſome *previous Reaſon* to induce to it, yet we are not the leſs free: For as Motives influence by *Perſuaſion*, and not by Compulſion; ſo every man has power to *comply* with, or to *reject* theſe Excitements: That is, every man is at liberty to act, or to refrain from acting, agreeably with, or contrary to what each of thoſe Motives conſidered

ſidered *ſingly* would excite him ſo. And that this is the Caſe, is evident in Fact; we feel or experience ſuch a Power, or that we are thus at liberty, and every Action we do is the product of ſuch a Choice. And,

THO when an Excitement to Action takes place, ſome Motive or other will *finally prevail*; and that Motive with regard to the Event, is as effectual to *produce* or *prevent* the Action as phyſical Neceſſity; yet there is not the like *Compulſion* in one Caſe, as in the other. The Motive that prevails being not a *Power*, or *active Cauſe*, but barely a *paſſive Reaſon* of, or an Excitement to the Action, or to the refraining from acting. There being this apparent Difference between *motive* and *phyſical Neceſſity*, *viz.* the one *forces*, the other does but *invite*: one is an *Addreſs* to an *active*, the other is *acting upon* a *paſſive Being*: The one ſuppoſes *Liberty*, the other *Paſſiveneſs* in the Subject influenced or wrought on by them. And conſequently Man has *power*, and is as much at *liberty* to reject the Motive that *does prevail*, as he has power, and is at liberty to *reject* thoſe Motives that do not.

TO this I may add, that if Motives did work *irreſiſtibly*, then the active Power would *unavoidably* be *excited* to act, or be *reſtrained* from acting, whenever any *Motive* is preſent to the mind. But that this

is not the Caſe, is evident from Experience; ſometimes the Motive that preſents prevails, and ſometimes it does not. Again,

IF Motives work irreſiſtibly, then in every Inſtance, where *two Motives* are preſent to the Mind, one exciting to *act*, and another exciting to the *contrary* (which is frequently the Caſe) a Man muſt be under a neceſſity of *doing* and *avoiding* the *ſame* Action, at the *ſame* time; which is plainly impoſſible in the Nature of Things.

IF it ſhould be urged, that as in phyſical Cauſes, the *ſtronger* Power *prevails*, tho both work neceſſarily; ſo in this Caſe, the ſtronger *Motive* prevails, and the weaker would do it, did not the ſtronger *intervene* and *prevent* it: Which ſhews that moral and phyſical Cauſes work alike *irreſiſtibly*.

I ANSWER: The Strength of this Objection lies in the *wrong Application* of the Term *Stronger*; it being applied to the Motive that *prevails*, without any regard to what is ſtronger or weaker in the Nature of things.

THE Subjects which fall under the Cognizance of the Underſtanding are ſuch, as relate either to the *Truth*, or to the *Fitneſs* of Things. With regard to the former, the Terms Stronger or Weaker are only applicable to it, as they figuratively expreſs the *Sufficiency* or *Inſufficiency* of thoſe Arguments,

guments, by which the Truth of a Propoſition is deſigned to be eſtabliſhed there being no other way, in which Arguments are capable of being compared: and accordingly, an Argument is ſaid to be *ſtrong* or *weak*, as it *more* or *leſs* proves or confirms the Truth of the Propoſition it is brought to vouch for. And,

WITH regard to the latter, the forementioned Terms are applicable to it, only as they figuratively expreſs the *Fitneſs* or *Unfitneſs* of thoſe Actions, which the Motives of Perſuaſion would excite us to; there being no other way, in which Motives are capable of being compar'd: And accordingly a *Motive* is ſtrong or weak, as the *Action* is more or leſs *fit* to be performed which it excites to. And,

THO with regard to *phyſical Cauſes*, that which is ſtrongeſt always prevails; yet it is otherwiſe with regard to *moral Cauſes*. Of theſe ſometimes the *ſtronger*, ſometimes the *weaker* prevails: and the Ground of this Difference is evident; namely, that what we call moral Cauſes, ſtrictly ſpeaking, are no Cauſes at all; but barely *paſſive Reaſons* of, or *Excitements* to the Action, or to the refraining from acting. Which Excitements we have power, or are at liberty to comply with or reject, as I have ſhewed above. And,

THUS at one time a Man chuſes to gratify a natural Appetite, tho he is convinced of the *Unfitneſs* of that Gratification; and then the *weaker* Motive prevails: And at another time, he rejects that Excitement, becauſe of its *Unfitneſs*, and then the *ſtronger* prevails. Now to ſay in this Caſe, that the Motive ariſing from the Man's *Appetite*, was ſtrongeſt at one time; and that ariſing from his *Judgment*, was ſtrongeſt at the other: This is to determine the Strength, or Weakneſs of a Motive from the *Event* only, and not from what is ſtronger or weaker in the *Nature of Things*. And to ſay that the Motive *prevailed*, becauſe it was ſtrongeſt, is the ſame as to ſay, that it prevailed, becauſe it *did prevail*; prevailing it ſelf, being made the *Ground* of that Diſtinction.

TO this I may add, that as one Argument, in the Nature of the Thing, is *ſtronger* than another, that is, one does really prove what the other does not; and as our Underſtandings do not *conſtitute* that Difference, but only judge *right* or *wrong* concerning it: ſo to ſay that a concluſive Argument is weak, becauſe it *does not convince*, is prepoſterous; it being evident, that the Defect, or Weakneſs is not in the Argument, but in the Man's *Underſtanding*, who is not convinced by it. So,

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IN like manner, one *Motive* is, in the Nature of the Thing, ſtronger than another; that is, it is *fitter* to excite to Action; and our *Wills* do not conſtitute that Difference, but only *determine* us to a right or wrong Choice. And therefore to ſay, that a Motive which excites to a *right Choice* is weak, becauſe it does not prevail, is alike prepoſterous: It being alike evident, that the *Defect* or *Weakneſs* is not in the Motive, but in our *Wills*, which *refuſe* to be influenced or wrought on by it. Again,

IF it ſhould be urged, that the *Exertion* of the *active Faculty* in Man is neceſſarily connected with the *laſt Judgment*, or *Perception* of the *Underſtanding*: And as Man is allowed to be *paſſive*, with regard to ſuch Judgment or Perception; ſo conſequently, thoſe Actions cannot be free which are *neceſſarily connected* with it.

I ANSWER, the *Perception* and the *Judgment* of the Underſtanding may be conſider'd, either as the *ſame Thing*, or elſe as *two different Things*: That is to ſay, tho every Act of judging may be truly ſaid to be an Act of Perception; yet every Act of Perception is not an Act of judging. So that *Perception*, when diſtinguiſhed from *judging*, is the *ſeeing Things* as they *are* (or as they *appear* to be) with their *Circumſtances* and *Conſequences*; and *judging* is the ſeeing, or judging of their *Fitneſs*

or

or *Unfitneſs*, as they ſtand *related* to thoſe Circumſtances, *&c.* And,

THO the Underſtanding does as *truly perceive* the Fitneſs or Unfitneſs of Things (or what they appear to be) when it judges as aforeſaid, as it doth the *Things themſelves*, with their *Circumſtances*, *&c.* yet theſe are plainly two diſtinct kinds of Perception; the one *natural*, the other *moral*; if I may thus diſtinguiſh them. And,

THO we are *paſſive* with regard to theſe Perceptions, and cannot ſee Things otherwiſe than as they appear to us, whether in a natural or a moral View: And tho there cannot be ſuch a thing as Action, without a *precedent Perception*; yet Perception and Action are not *neceſſarily connected*, as aforeſaid. I ſhall explain this by a familiar Example:

TWO Men are in Company together; the one offers in Words to *give* the other ſome valuable Thing, and likewiſe *reacheth* forth his Hand to give him that thing: The other, not only perceives the *kind Offer* of his Friend, and the *Thing* thus offered, as likewiſe the *Valuableneſs* of that Thing; but he alſo *perceives*, or *judges*, that it is a thing not fit to be given by his Friend, and that it is unfit for him to receive it from him, with regard to each of their *Circumſtances*. In this caſe, tho the Thing be perceived as aforeſaid, and tho there could be

be no place for accepting, or refuſing, if there had been no *Perception* of the Offer; yet that Perception is not neceſſarily connected: that is, it is not the *phyſical Cauſe* of the Action that follows. The Man, notwithſtanding theſe Perceptions, has *power*, and is at *liberty* covetouſly to *accept*, or generouſly to *refuſe* the Gift, which his Friend has ſo kindly, but unfitly offered him.

THERE being not any thing more clear and evident from Experience than this; namely, that one man covetouſly prefers the *leſſer Good* of himſelf to the *greater Good* of another, or to the *Good* of the *Publick*, when he ſees that theſe come in competition; and another man generouſly prefers the *greater Good* of another, or the *Good* of the *Publick*, to the *leſſer Good* of himſelf, when theſe come in competition: which could not poſſibly be, if Perception and Action were *neceſſarily connected* as aforeſaid. For if that were the caſe, then all Men would be *generous* or *ſelfiſh* alike, as their Underſtandings inform them of the Conſequences of their Actions, with regard to the Good or Evil of themſelves or others; the ſame *Cauſe* would produce the ſame *Effect*; the ſame *Perception* muſt neceſſarily produce the ſame *Action* in *every Subject*. But ſurely the contrary to this is evident in Fact. Beſides,

THAT Perception and Action are not *neceſſarily connected* as aforeſaid, is farther evident from hence: A man in a Dream has a real Perception, not only of the *Excitements* to Action, but of *Action itſelf*, even whilſt the *active Power* is at *reſt*. And thus, a man has a real Perception of his *eating* and *drinking*, *walking* and *talking*, and the like; and yet none of the *Motions* of the Body take place, by which thoſe *complex Actions* are performed. And from hence I argue,

IF the real Perception of the Excitements to Action, and of the Actions themſelves which they excite to, be not ſufficient to produce real Action, which is the preſent Caſe; then it will unavoidably follow, that Action is not *neceſſarily connected* with Perception, but is produced by ſome other Cauſe.

IT is true, Action does *ſometimes* follow or accompany ſuch Perception: Men ſometimes talk and walk, and perform other Actions in their Dreams; but this is *ſeldom*. Whereas if Action were neceſſarily connected with Perception, this would *always* be the caſe. And,

THO the perceptive Faculty is *deluded*, the Objects of Perception being fictitious, and not real; yet that cannot alter the caſe, with regard to the *phyſical Influence* of ſuch Perception; ſeeing the Perception itſelf is real,

real, whether the Objects of it are ſo or not. A Man has as real a Perception, and is as much convinced at the time, that he eats and drinks when he is aſleep, as when he performs thoſe Actions when awake; only they ariſe from, and are produced by *different Cauſes*.

IN fine, Perception and Action are the Effects of two Cauſes, which have no more connection than *Activeneſs* and *Paſſiveneſs*. If I paſs along the Street, and a *miſerable Object* be preſented to my View, my Perception is *neceſſary*; the Idea of that Object being raiſed in my Mind, independent of my Will: And if I am conſcious that I have power to deliver the aforeſaid Object from the Miſery it labours under, and if I judge that it is right and fit I ſhould do ſo; I am, with regard to theſe Perceptions, ſo far *paſſive*, as that if I *attend* to the Subject, I cannot think otherwiſe of it than I do. But if I miniſter that Relief, this muſt be done by a *Power*, in the Exerciſe of which I am not *paſſive* but *active*: I muſt give ſuch *Motions* to my Body, as are neceſſary to produce that Effect, when I am at liberty either to *exert* the active Faculty, or to be at *reſt*. And if ſuch Motion does take place, it is not the Perception of the *miſerable Object*, nor of my *Ability* to relieve, nor of the *Fitneſs* of that Relief, nor yet the Perception of *relieving* itſelf,

which is the *phyſical Cauſe* of that Motion: All theſe Perceptions may take place in a Dream, and yet no Motion follow; Motion being performed by a Power, which is as diſtinct from the Power of Perception, as Perception is from Action.

IF it ſhould be farther urged, allowing that Perception and Action are not neceſſarily connected; yet ſeeing every Man always does what appears to him to be *beſt at the Time*, therefore *Liberty* and *Neceſſity* in the Iſſue amount to the *ſame Thing*.

BEFORE I return an Anſwer to this Objection, I find it proper to obſerve, That the Term *Beſt* is comparative. For when ſeveral Things or Actions come in competition as to their Goodneſs, Fitneſs, and the like; and the Underſtanding has taken a View of them in theſe Reſpects; then it judges *that* particular Thing or Action to be *beſt*, which upon ſuch Enquiry, appears to have the *Preference* in that Particular wherein the Compariſon is made. So that, to do always what appears to be *beſt at the Time*, is to act always upon a *Judgment* form'd as afore-ſaid. This being premiſed,

I ANSWER, *Firſt*, Man is ſo far from following his Judgment in all Caſes, that on the contrary, he ſometimes *acts without it*, and ſometimes *acts againſt it*, as is abundantly evident from Experience. By acting without Judgment, I do not mean that

a Man *acts without Thinking*: But this I mean, that he acts without entering into the *Queſtion*, whether the Action be good or evil, fit or unfit. He drinks to gratify a natural Inclination, without examining whether it is *beſt* to *gratify* that Inclination, or to *deny* it. And as we *ſometimes* act without Judgment, ſo ſad Experience ſhews, that we *ſometimes* act againſt it. A Man who is thorowly convinc'd from Experience, that *Drinking* to *exceſs* will draw upon him ſuch Illneſs, as is ten times more than equivalent to the Pleaſure he takes in that Indulgence; he will, notwithſtanding that *Conviction*, drink to exceſs as aforeſaid; even tho his Conviction of the *ſad Conſequence* of that Exceſs be urg'd to him as a *Reaſon* againſt it. And not only in this, but alſo in many other Caſes, our Appetites and Paſſions lead us to act not only *without*, but *againſt our Judgment* as afore-ſaid. And,

THO full Conviction of the Unfitneſs of an Action, is in the Nature of the Thing a proper *Motive* or *Reaſon* againſt ſuch Action; yet it does not *always prevail*. The Underſtanding may interpoſe, and urge even *Mathematical Demonſtration*, in order to *engage* to Action, or to *refrain* from it: And yet, alas, theſe *Bonds* of full Conviction are *too weak* to hold Men with. Theſe Ropes are *ſometimes* broken in ſun-

der like a Thread, when *Paſſion* or *Appetite* interpoſes, and whilſt the *Samſon's Lock* of *Liberty* remains. Again,

I ANSWER, *Secondly*, Suppoſing Man did always act from a Conviction of the Fitneſs of the Action, yet this would not *affect* his *Liberty*; becauſe his Faculties are exerciſed in the *ſame way*, and with the *ſame freedom* when he *follows his Judgment*, as when he acts *againſt it*. That is, the Fitneſs of the Action, is no more than a *Motive*, or the *Ground*, or *Reaſon* of acting in one Caſe; as the Motives which ariſe from Appetite, Paſſion, or any other Part of our Compoſition, *are* in any other Caſe. And therefore, to ſay that *Liberty* and *Neceſſity* in the Iſſue, amount to the *ſame Thing*; is the ſame as to ſay, that *two different* and *contrary* Ideas in the Iſſue, amount to the *ſame Idea*: Which ſurely, is moſt *abſurd* and *contradictory*, and introduces the utmoſt Confuſion.

IF it ſhould be farther urged, That by being *beſt at the Time*, as in the Objection above, is not meant what at the Time is judged beſt upon the whole, but only what will then give the greateſt preſent Pleaſure: I anſwer, That every Act of Self-denial is a manifeſt Proof of the contrary; in which Men forego what to them appears the greateſt preſent Pleaſure; either to ward off ſome greater future Evil from themſelves, or o-

thers, or elſe to procure ſome greater future Good.

UPON the whole, I think I may venture to ſay, that tho God is the *Author of Nature*, and conſequently of all the Parts of that Compoſition, from whence the *Motives* to Action ariſe; yet he cannot *fairly* be charged with the *Actions themſelves*, which thoſe Motives are the *Ground* or *Reaſon* of; ſeeing he has left the *Direction* of this well compoſed Syſtem, (*viz.* the *human Compoſition*) to be the Subject of every Man's *free Choice*. Again,

IF it ſhould be urged, That it is allowed on all hands to be *impoſſible* for God to act contrary to his *moral Perfections*; and if ſo, then his Actions muſt be neceſſary; and if God's Actions are neceſſary, then ours *may* be ſo.

I ANSWER, The Strength of this Objection lies in the *improper* Uſe of the Word *impoſſible*: Which in this Caſe, is figuratively uſed to expreſs, *the prevailing Influence* of thoſe Motives of Perſuaſion, which we know will as effectually *prevent*, as any phyſical Impoſſibility. And thus we ſay, it is morally impoſſible for God to *do Evil*: By which is meant, that the moral Unfitneſs of ſuch a Conduct affords a *Motive*, which by its perſuaſive Influence will as effectually *prevent God* from doing Evil, as any phyſical Impoſſibility; that is, as any Impoſſibility

poſſibility ariſing from *phyſical Impediments* can do. So that

THE *Ground* of this Knowledg, *viz.* that God will not do Evil, does not ariſe from our knowing that he wants either Power or Liberty to do Evil, or that the fore-mentioned *Motive* will always *neceſſarily prevent* every intelligent Being from acting thus; and thereby that it is ſtrictly impoſſible: but it ariſes from hence, that as in the Nature of the Thing no Action can take place, without ſome Motive to excite to it; and as the doing Evil is morally unfit; ſo that Unfitneſs will prevent every intelligent Being from doing Evil in all thoſe Caſes in which there is not any thing in the Compoſition of that Being, which affords an *Excitement* or *Temptation* to it: which is the Caſe with reſpect to *God*. And this moral Reſtraint we *commonly* tho improperly or figuratively, call *moral Impoſſibility*. Again,

IF it ſhould be urged, that *God foreknows* all the Actions of Men, and conſequently that thoſe Actions are not free, *Preſcience* and *Liberty* being inconſiſtent:

I ANSWER, That this Objection is built upon a twofold Preſumption, *viz.* *Firſt*, That *God does foreknow* all the Action of Men. And *Secondly*, That Preſcience and Liberty are *inconſiſtent*.

IF

IF it ſhould be ſaid of the *Firſt* of theſe, that it is ſuppoſed in God's *Natural* Character, as he is poſſeſſed of *all Perfection:*

I ANSWER, If the Actions of voluntary Agents are *not fore-knowable in the Nature of Things*; then Preſcience is not ſuppoſed in God's natural Character as aforeſaid; becauſe it cannot be an *Imperfection* in God for him not to foreknow, what is *not knowable in Nature*. And if they are foreknowable in the Nature of Things, then the Divine Preſcience is no Objection againſt Liberty.

IF it ſhould be farther urged, That as the *Excitements* to Action ariſe from the ſeveral Parts of our *Compoſition*; and as God perfectly foreknows the *Meaſure* of Mens *Underſtandings*, their *Diſpoſition*, *Temper* and *Frame*; theſe being the *Reſult* of that Compoſition, and the Circumſtances that attend it; ſo he foreknows what *Motives* will ſute all Tempers and Diſpoſitions, as likewiſe when each Motive will *preſent:* And from hence he foreknows, or rightly judges what *Influence* they will have upon the Will, and conſequently he foreknows the Action itſelf.

I ANSWER, *Firſt*, If there were ſuch a Connection betwixt the Excitements to Action, and Action itſelf, ſo as that one did *neceſſarily* follow the other; then I grant, that as this might be a proper Foundation

dation for Preſcience, ſo it would be deſtructive of Liberty. But this is by no means the Caſe: the Excitements to Action, and the Will, having no neceſſary Connection at all, as I have ſhewn above. And

TO ſay, That God foreknows what Motives will *ſuite* all Tempers and Diſpoſitions, is no more than to ſay, that he foreknows what will be Motives, or Excitements to Action to Perſons of all Tempers and Diſpoſitions: But this, I think, cannot in the Nature of the Thing, be a Foundation for *foreknowing abſolutely* how a Man will determine from ſuch Motives; ſeeing the Volition of his Will is not neceſſarily connected with them. Again,

I ANSWER, *Secondly*, That which is here made the Ground of Preſcience, is in reality *Preſcience itſelf*. For as the Meaſure of the Underſtanding, the Diſpoſition, Temper and Frame of particular Perſons, and of the ſame Perſon at different times, are the reſult of the human Compoſition, together with a Variety of Circumſtances that concur; ſo theſe Circumſtances, as likewiſe that which gives occaſion for the Excitements to Action, are partly the Product of *phyſical Cauſes*, partly *accidental*, not depending (for any thing that appears) upon the Underſtanding, Diſpoſition, Temper or Frame of any intelligent Being whatſoever; and partly ſuch as ariſe from

from our having to do with other *Agents* like our ſelves : The Knowledg of all which, plainly *includes Preſcience*, and therefore cannot be the Ground or Reaſon of it.

IF it ſhould be ſaid of the *ſecond* Point preſumed in the Objection, (*viz.* the *Inconſiſtency* of Preſcience with Liberty) that it is capable of being demonſtrated thus.

ALL Effects depend upon their Cauſes : And therefore in order *abſolutely* to *foreknow* the *Effect*, it is abſolutely neceſſary to *know* the *Cauſe*. And as Actions are cauſed by the Volition of the Will ; ſo that Volition muſt be *known*, or elſe the Action cannot be *foreknown*, which is the Effect of it. Again,

THE Volition of the Will is the *Effect* of ſome precedent Cauſe, or elſe it is the *firſt Mover*. If it is the Effect of a precedent Cauſe, then as that Cauſe muſt be known in order to foreknow its Effect ; ſo conſequently Man is not free, becauſe the Volition of his Will is *determined* by that Cauſe. But if the Will is the firſt Mover, then its Volition cannot be foreknowable in the Nature of Things ; becauſe there is not the *Knowledg* of any *precedent Cauſe* to diſcover it by.

I ANSWER, Tho the Effects of phyſical Cauſes cannot be *abſolutely* foreknown, without the Knowledg of their Cauſes, or unleſs that Knowledg be communicated

from thoſe who know thoſe Cauſes; and thoſe Cauſes cannot be foreknown, without the Knowledg of their Cauſes, and ſo on: Yet, I think, this does not *conclude* againſt the *Foreknowledg* of the Volition of the Will in *all Caſes*; even tho that Volition has no precedent Cauſe to diſcover it by. For,

THO the Will is the *firſt Mover*, and conſequently its Volition has no Cauſe external to, or without itſelf; yet that Volition cannot take place, without ſome *previous Reaſon* or *Motive* to induce to it. And therefore if an Excitement to Action takes place, and that Excitement is foreknowable in the Nature of Things; and if it is likewiſe foreknowable that no other Excitement can poſſibly take place to influence in the Choice; then that Excitement will be the Ground or Reaſon of the Volition of the Will, and conſequently ſuch Volition is foreknowable in the Nature of Things. And thus it holds good in the Negative, as we foreknow that God will *not do Evil*, in as much as we know that there cannot poſſibly take place any Reaſon or Motive to induce him to it. And thus far we foreknow that God *will do good*, in as much as we know, that the doing good is truly valuable in itſelf, and as ſuch is a Motive proper and ſufficient to influence the Divine Will, and conſequently to excite him to Action, whenever

whenever the Nature and Circumſtances of the Caſe render it fit and proper that he ſhould do ſo. And,

IF we could *foreſee* ſuch a Caſe, in which it would be morally fit for God to act thus, or thus; then we ſhould have an *equal Certainty* of the Event *before*, as after the Action. And tho the Event would be certain antecedently to the Action, yet the Divine Action would not be neceſſary, but *free*: that is, in ſuch a Caſe, God would not be moved or determined to act from any natural or phyſical Neceſſity; but he would be *perſuaded* to it (if I may thus ſpeak) from a *moral Motive*: which Motive is not a Power, or phyſical Cauſe, but barely a paſſive Reaſon of the Action. And therefore to ſay, that *Certainty of the Event* makes the *Action neceſſary*; this appears plainly to be a Miſtake, becauſe Certainty in the preſent Caſe, does not ariſe from any natural Neceſſity God is under to act, but from the *Knowledg* of the *Fitneſs* of the Action: which Fitneſs, as it will be (not the phyſical Cauſe, but) the *Ground* or *Reaſon* of acting to God; ſo the Knowledg of that Fitneſs, will be the Ground of *Preſcience*, and conſequently of *Certainty* of the Event, with reſpect to us. But

WITH regard to Men, who have *different Motives* ariſing from their Compoſition, one exciting to act, and another exciting to

the contrary; this I allow very much alters the Caſe, and renders the Foreknowledg of the Volition of the Will in ſuch Caſes more *difficult* to be *accounted for*; tho I think it is not a *Proof* of the contrary. And therefore abſolutely to determine that Preſcience and human Liberty are, or that they are not conſiſtent; this, I think, is preſuming, and is void of Proof.

AS to the Term *Contingent*, which is ſometimes made uſe of in this Caſe, if it be applyed only to thoſe *precarious Circumſtances* of human Actions, which take place not only without, but ſometimes contrary to the Will and Intention of the Agent, and ſo are perfectly accidental; then I think, that there is not any thing in Nature, which can be a *Foundation* for *Preſcience*, with regard to ſuch caſual Circumſtances. And I take it, the Caſe is the ſame with regard to all thoſe *Actions* which are occaſioned by them. For if there is not any Foundation for foreknowing the *accidental Circumſtances* of human Actions, then there can be no *Foundation* for *foreknowing* thoſe Actions, which depend upon ſuch Circumſtances as the *Ground* and *Reaſon* of them. As thus,

A MAN throws a Stone with an intent to hit a Dog, but miſſing the Dog, he hits a Man paſſing by. In this Caſe as the Circumſtance of the Action, *viz. hitting the Man*, was not only without, but contrary

to

to the Will and Intention of the Agent, and therefore was perfectly accidental; ſo I think, that there is not any thing in Nature which can be a *Foundation* for *Preſcience*, with reſpect to this precarious Circumſtance. And if ſo, then whatever Actions *follow*, or are *occaſioned* by it, theſe muſt ſtand upon the ſame foot with regard to Preſcience, as the *Circumſtance* of the *Action* does, which either mediately or immediately is the Ground or Reaſon of them. But this, I think, does not affect the Caſe, as to the *Inconſiſtency* of Preſcience with human Liberty. Upon the whole,

MY anſwer to the Objection is this. I have already proved that Man is free; by ſhewing that the Motives which excite him to act, or to refrain from acting, influence *perſuaſively*, and not neceſſarily: Which perſuaſive Influence, every Man has power, or he is at liberty to *comply* with, or *reject*; and conſequently, either there is no Preſcience, or elſe Preſcience and human Liberty are conſiſtent: But which of theſe is the Caſe, as it is not eaſy to determine, ſo it is beſide the preſent Argument. Again,

IF it ſhould be urged, Tho we are at liberty to act from what Motive we pleaſe, and tho Motive is not an active or phyſical Cauſe, but only a paſſive Reaſon of acting, or of refuſing to act; yet as we are not *arbitrary* with regard to what ſhall pleaſe, but

are

are determined *independent* of our Will; ſo conſequently we are not free, or, in other words, *Vertue* and *Vice* are not the Subjects of our free Choice.

I ANSWER, *Firſt*, If the Freedom of an Agent conſiſts in his having power and being at liberty to conſtitute a *Difference* in Things; that is, *arbitrarily to determine* what ſhall be good or evil, right or wrong; and conſequently, what ſhall be pleaſing or diſpleaſing; then it muſt be granted, that there neither is nor can be any ſuch thing as Liberty, becauſe theſe ariſe from, and are founded in the Nature of Things, independent of any ſuch Determination.

BESIDES, the *Suppoſition* of ſuch a Power carries in it an Abſurdity: For as Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, neceſſarily ſuppoſe a *natural Difference* in Things; (take away that Difference, and there can be no ſuch Diſtinctions; *Crooked* and *Streight* cannot take place without a Difference in Nature;) ſo without that Difference, there cannot be a Foundation for being *pleaſed* with one Thing, and *diſpleaſed* with another, but all Things muſt pleaſe or diſpleaſe alike. And therefore to ſuppoſe a Power to make a Difference in Things, when there is none in Nature, is to ſuppoſe that Things can differ while they are alike; which is a Contradiction. But farther,

I ANSWER, *Secondly*, that the Liberty here contended for as the Fonndation of *Vertue* and *Vice*, does not ariſe from a Power or Liberty to conſtitute a Difference in Things, but it ariſes from a Power or Freedom to act *agreeably* with, or *contrary* to the *moral Fitneſs* of Things; ſuppoſing ſuch a Difference in Nature. And

FOR the clearing of this Point I obſerve, That Vertue or Goodneſs, ſtrictly and properly ſo called, conſiſts in *communicating Happineſs* to the *ſuitable* Subjects of it, or in the indeavouring to do it, by doing and avoiding what appears to be proper for the attainment of that End: and that Vice, or moral Evil, conſiſts in *communicating Unhappineſs* to the *improper* Subjects of it, or in contributing either negatively or poſitively to that Unhappineſs. Again,

I FARTHER obſerve, That as Man is a *compound Being*, ſo this renders him capable of ſeveral diſtinct kinds of Pleaſure; which in other words we call Happineſs: and the Capacity he has for taſting thoſe Pleaſures, renders him capable of their Contrarys, as I have before ſhewn. He is hereby alſo qualified for *Society*; that is, for the *giving*, and *receiving* Pleaſure to, and from others of his kind: and this likewiſe renders him capable of giving and receiving the contrary. And as the Appetites and Paſſions, which in part conſtitute human Nature, diſpoſe Men to procure the Comforts, and guard againſt the

the Evils of Life, both for themſelves and others; ſo they are capable of being *viciated*, that is, of being indulged to an Exceſs, and thereby of diſpoſing Men contrarily to what they were deſigned, and what the moral Fitneſs of Things requires.

MAN is alſo endowed with a Faculty of *Underſtanding*, which renders him capable of diſcerning the moral Difference in Things, and thereby of knowing that it is right and fit in the Nature of Things, that all others ſhould be happy as well as himſelf; and conſequently, that it is right and fit that he ſhould proſecute the Happineſs not only of himſelf, but of all others as far as it is in his Power, and is conſiſtent with his own; yea, that he ſhould *deny himſelf*, when his own and the common Felicity come in *competition*.

MAN being thus conſtituted, is hereby qualified to render himſelf a *generous* or a *ſelfiſh* Creature; that is, he is qualified to direct his Inclinations and Endeavours towards the attaining his own Pleaſure, in *conjunction* with, and in *ſubordination* to the common Happineſs; or to direct theſe in diſtinction from, and in oppoſition to the *common Felicity*: and in the *free Exerciſe* of this Power, he becomes either vertuous, or vicious. For,

THO every man will be diſpoſed, from the nature of the thing, to *prefer* Happineſs to Miſery; and tho every man's *particular*

ticular Conſtitution may incline him to prefer one kind of Pleaſure to another, which, I think, is all that can be urged in the preſent Caſe; yet no man is hereby *determined* to be generous or ſelfiſh.

A GENEROUS man prefers the common Felicity to his own, and a ſelfiſh man prefers his own to the publick; a generous man prefers one kind of Pleaſure to another, but *denies himſelf* in both, when his own and the common Happineſs come in competition: A ſelfiſh man likewiſe prefers one kind of Pleaſure to another, and he *indulges himſelf* in both, tho they are inconſiſtent with, and deſtructive of the common Good. And,

THE Ground of this Difference, *viz.* that one man is generous or vertuous, and another man is ſelfiſh or vicious, does not ariſe from the natural Difference in things; for then all men would be vertuous or vicious alike; nor yet from an Inclination, ariſing from every man's particular Conſtitution, to prefer one kind of Pleaſure to another, that being equally the Caſe both of vertuous and of vicious men: but it ariſes plainly from that *Power*, or *Liberty*, which takes place in every man, to *direct* or *reſtrain* his Inclinations, and Endeavours, either one way or the other, as aforeſaid.

IF it ſhould be farther urged, Allowing that Vertue and Vice are the Subjects of mens free Choice, as the Term *Free* is oppoſed to *Neceſſity*; yet they are not free with regard to every thing which may *influence* or *biaſs* them in that Choice; ſeeing their natural Conſtitution very *ſtrongly diſpoſes* them to Vice: by which means, Vice has much the Advantage of Vertue, and it is great odds but men will be vicious, they being ſo ſtrongly inclined by their *natural* Appetites and Affections to chuſe it rather than Vertue.

TO this it may be anſwered, Men are generally too haſty in their *Cenſures* of *Nature*: That we have Appetites and Affections, is beyond diſpute; but that theſe, as they are of Nature's providing, *diſpoſe* and *incline* us to Vice, will be denied: yea, our natural Conſtitution, upon the *whole*, is ſo far from diſpoſing us to Vice, that on the contrary it is an Excitement to Vertue.

MAN is a compound Creature, who is fitly conſtituted to anſwer the Purpoſes of *Social Felicity*; his Appetites, and Paſſions diſpoſe him to *promote* and *ſecure* the publick Good; his Underſtanding qualifies him to *diſcern* betwixt Right and Wrong, Good and Evil; and conſequently, to judge of the *Fitneſs* or *Unfitneſs* of his Actions, with relation to that End. And he is endowed with *Power*, to guide his Behaviour as his

Judgment

Judgment ſhall direct; and when the Harmony of this Compoſition is preſerved, then Man is an *agreeable* and *uſeful*, or in other words, a vertuous Creature.

IT is true, Man is capable of being the contrary; all his Appetites and Paſſions are capable of being *viciated*; that is, of being indulged beyond their due Bounds, by which Indulgence, the *Harmony* of that Compoſition is diſturbed; Evil is *introduced*, and Man becomes in *many* Inſtances, a *diſagreeable* and *hurtful*, or in other words, a vicious Creature. But then, it ought to be remembered, that his Conduct upon the whole is *unnatural*, ſeeing his Compoſition *taken together* diſpoſes him to the contrary. This, I imagine, will appear more plainly to be the Caſe, when I have examined two or three Branches of human Affection, which are the *chief Occaſions* of Evil.

SELF-LOVE (which unhappily proves introductive to much Vice) was rightly placed in human Nature, by the great Author of our Being, to diſpoſe us to do all that is neceſſary for our Support and Preſervation, and to guard againſt every Danger we are expoſed to. But then there are other Paſſions planted in us, *viz. Sympathy*, *Pity* and *Compaſſion*, which diſpoſe us to enter into the Concerns of our *fellow Creatures*, and to do what is neceſſary to make them happy. And,

AS theſe different Affections were deſigned for a *Ballance* to, and a *conſtant Check* upon each other; and as the directing each, and every of theſe to their *proper* Objects, and keeping them within *due Bounds*, not indulging one to the depreſſing of another, is properly our *natural State*; and as *Reaſon* joins Iſſue, and ſhews us that it is as fit in the Nature of Things, that all others ſhould be happy, as that we ſhould be ſo, and thereby convinces us of the *Fitneſs* of our Endeavours in proſecuting the Happineſs of others, as well as our own: So this ſhews plainly, that our Compoſition taken together, is ſo far from *inclining* us to *Vice*, that on the contrary it *diſpoſes* us to *Vertue*; and that when Self-Love becomes the *Occaſion* of *Evil*, it is not by our following Nature, but by perverting it.

THUS again, the affectionate Concern we have for the happineſs and welfare of our *Children* and *Kindred*, (a Paſſion which poſſibly occaſions more Vice in the World than any other Branch of our Compoſition) was rightly and wiſely placed in human Nature, to point out to us who they are, upon whom we are *firſt* to exerciſe our *Care* and *Kindneſs*. For as our Power of doing Good is limited, by which means we are uncapable of ſerving all who need Aſſiſtance from others; ſo this Affection points out to us, who of all others are the *immediate*

diate Objects of our Regard. We are to love, and take care of ſuch Relatives, in *Diſtinction* from, but not in *Oppoſition* to the reſt of our *fellow-Creatures*; who need our Help, and who have or would have an equal *right* to our Aſſiſtance, if we had equal Power of helping all, as we have of aſſiſting thoſe, who are providentially made our immediate Dependents. So that

WHEN Love to our Offspring, and Relations, is *moderated* and kept within *due Bounds*, then it leads to Vertue; that is, to the promoting the common Happineſs: But when this Affection is ſo *indulged*, as that it depreſſes our *Pity* and *Compaſſion* to the reſt of our fellow-Creatures, and thereby *prevents* us from doing that Good to others, which their Neceſſity calls for, and our Ability enables us to do; in theſe Caſes the Affection is vitiated, and becomes the *Occaſion* of much Evil. But then it ought to be remembred, that this Evil is not *juſtly chargeable* upon Nature, but upon its Perverſion and Abuſe.

THE like may be ſaid with regard to *Love* to our *Country*. All that *Devaſtation* and *Miſery*, which has been at any time introduced by this Branch of human Affection, did not ſpring from the natural Uſe, but from the Perverſion and Abuſe of it.

WHEN Love to our Country is moderated, and kept within due Bounds; that is, when

when it diſpoſes us to guard againſt all Approaches to *Arbitrary Power*, and every thing which the *Common-weal* is in danger of ſuffering by; and when we love, and do good to our Country, in *Diſtinction* from, but not in *Oppoſition* to other *Countrys*, which would have an equal *right* to our Regard, if we had equal Power of helping all, as we have of aſſiſting our own; then Love to our Country is a *Vertue*. But

IF we indulge the Paſſion beyond its due Bounds, and love our Country in Oppoſition to other Countrys, ſo as to do them *hurt* and *damage*, in order to promote the *Intereſt*, and raiſe the *Glory* of our own; or if we neglect other Countrys, when it is in our Power to ſerve our own, and them alſo: in theſe Caſes, the proper uſe of the Affection is *perverted*, and Love to our Country is *evil* and *vicious*; there being as much Reaſon, that thoſe People ſhould be happy who live upon any other Part of the Globe, as that they ſhould be ſo who live upon the ſame Spot of Earth with us.

AS far as the *old Romans* Love to their Country was rightly directed and applied as above; ſo far it was *vertuous*, and worthy of our *Praiſe* and *Imitation*. But, if Love to their Country led them at any time to *impoveriſh*, *enſlave*, or *lay waſte* other *Countrys*, in order to promote the *Intereſt*,

or

or raiſe the *Grandeur* of their own; or if it *prevented* them from helping other Countrys, when it was in their Power to ſerve their own, and them alſo; ſo far Love to their Country was *vicious*, and worthy of our *higheſt Contempt*.

THE Caſe is the ſame, with regard to all the *Appetites* and *Affections* planted in human Nature. Theſe were rightly and wiſely placed in us, by the great Author of our Being, for the Propagation of our Species, for the Preſervation of our ſelves and others, and for the ſerving ſuch other Purpoſes as are neceſſary to promote and ſecure the common Happineſs. And when any of theſe become the occaſion of Vice, or moral Evil, it ariſes not from the natural Uſe, but from the Perverſion and Abuſe of them.

FROM what I have obſerved, I think, it plainly appears, that *Nature*, and conſequently that the *God* of *Nature*, is not juſtly chargeable with that *moral Evil*, which is occaſioned by the Appetites and Paſſions which take place in, and in part conſtitute human Nature. It is true, God might, if he pleaſed, have prevented this kind of Evil; but then he would have prevented himſelf from making ſuch Creatures as we are, and from beſtowing on us thoſe excellent and valuable Gifts, by which we are rendred capable of making our ſelves the ſuitable and

proper

proper Objects of his Approbation and Affection; and of receiving from him ſuch farther Favours as his Wiſdom and Goodneſs may diſpoſe him to beſtow upon us.

IN fine, I think I may venture to ſay, that the *Evil* which takes place in the World, whether natural or moral, will not afford an Argument *againſt*, or in *prejudice* of the grand Point I have been defending; namely, that God is in reality a *wiſe*, and a *good* Being, *&c.*

THUS, Sir, I have endeavoured to vindicate God's *moral Character*, as to the *Cauſe* and *Origin* of Evil; the Point which you ſay your Doubt has ariſen from. And tho I may not have entred into every Queſtion, which ſo *nice*, and ſo *general* a Subject may be liable to; yet I think I have laid down ſuch *Principles*, from whence the true Anſwer to thoſe Queſtions may be gathered. I leave it to your Conſideration, wiſhing that it may give you Satisfaction; and proceed,

THIRDLY, and laſtly, to improve the whole to ſerve the Purpoſes of *Vertue* and *true Goodneſs*; by repreſenting to my Reader, what it is, which will render him truly *lovely* and *valuable* in himſelf, and truly *acceptable* and *well-pleaſing* to God. And

FIRST,

FIRST, I am to repreſent to my Reader, what it is which will render him truly lovely and valuable in himſelf; or what it is which conſtitutes a *good* and *vertuous Character*.

MAN (as I have already obſerved) is a Creature excellently conſtituted, to anſwer all the Purpoſes of *ſocial Felicity*, and to promote and carry on a *common Happineſs*. All his Appetites and Affections, when rightly directed, and kept in due Bounds, lead to this End: His Underſtanding likewiſe ſhews him the Fitneſs of a common Good, and the intrinſick Excellency, and Valuableneſs of purſuing it. So that,

WHEN the *Harmony* of this Compoſition is preſerved; that is, when each Appetite and Paſſion is kept in due Bounds; one not indulged to the depreſſing of another, and all by the Direction of the Underſtanding, made ſubſervient to the *common good*; then it is, that he is an *agreeable*, and *uſeful*, or in other words, a *vertuous*, and a *lovely Creature*. I ſay, when a Man has a true Concern, and a hearty Endeavour to promote the Happineſs and Well-being of the reſt of his fellow-Creatures, and in conſequence of which, he renders himſelf both agreeable and uſeful to all around him, and introduces as much *Happineſs* into the Creation as he can; then it is that he anſwers the Character of a *good* and *vertuous* Man.

THAT which makes God to be a *good Being*, is his doing good for *Goodneſs ſake*, his exerciſing his natural Propertys to ſerve the Purpoſes of *Benevolence*; his calling a Multitude of Creatures into Being, on purpoſe to communicate *Happineſs* to them; and his wiſe and kind Proviſion of all Things neceſſary to make them ſo: This is what renders *God* truly lovely and valuable. As for his boundleſs Power and Knowledg, his Immenſity, Eternity, and the like; tho theſe may lay a Foundation for *Admiration* and *Reverence*, yet theſe alone do not render him an *agreeable* Object. But when all his natural Propertys are influenced and directed by his Wiſdom and Goodneſs; this is what renders him *altogether lovely*, and the *Perfection* of *Beauty*. And,

AS this is what makes God truly valuable; ſo it is this, and this only, which can make *Men* ſo. When they are animated by ſuch a Spirit and Principle of *true Goodneſs*, as diſpoſes them to ſtudy and proſecute the Happineſs of their fellow Creatures, as far as it is in their power, by removing every *Uneaſineſs*, and every *Impediment* to their Comfort and Felicity; and by giving all that kind *Aſſiſtance* and *Protection*, which is neceſſary to make Life pleaſant and delightful; when they render themſelves both *agreeable* and *uſeful* to their Relations, their Servants, their Neighbours, and to all thoſe whom

whom they live among, or who are any ways capable of their help; then it is they anſwer that noble Character of being *good* and *vertuous*, and they are more or leſs ſo, as they more or leſs deſire and endeavour after the Happineſs and Well-being of all others, as aforeſaid.

MEN are very apt to *deceive* themſelves, and too often they *impoſe* upon others, by making that the *Ground* of this valuable Character, which does not in the nature of the thing, entitle them to it. Thus,

SOME men think that *ſevere Mortifications*, and *denying themſelves* thoſe things which God hath kindly provided for our Enjoyment, denominate a man to be good and vertuous. Others value themſelves for the *Orthodoxy* of their Opinions, their *Zeal* for this, or that Scheme of Religion; their being engaged in this or that *Party*; their Diligence in *propagating* what they eſteem Truth, and their Patience and Conſtancy in *ſuffering* for it. Others think that *Conſtancy* and *Serioufneſs* in reading and hearing the Word of God, attending upon *Divine Ordinances*, and the like, are what conſtitute a good and vertuous Character. Whereas all theſe may take place in the ſame Perſon, and yet he may not have any thing of Vertue or Goodneſs in him; becauſe,

notwithſtanding theſe, he may be deſtitute of what is truly valuable, *viz.* that Temper, and Behaviour, as aforeſaid. Yea, a man may abound in theſe, and yet be exceedingly vicious, by his *monopolizing* the Beſſings and Comforts of Life to himſelf, and by his contributing much to the Miſery and Unhappineſs of others. But,

THAT which men are in the greateſt danger of being deceived by, in this Caſe, is: When they are *ſober* and *temperate* in their Enjoyments, *quiet* and *peaceable* among their Neighbours, *true* and *faithful* in their Covenants and Promiſes, ſtrictly *juſt* in anſwering every legal Demand, and the like; theſe are eſteemed great Vertues, whereas in reality it is not ſo: A man may have all theſe, and yet not be a good man; becauſe he may want the Spirit, and Practice of true Goodneſs, as aforeſaid; which is *eſſential* to a good and vertuous Character.

THE former conſtitutes but a *negative* Character, *viz.* not an evil man; that is, the man in whom the above mentioned Qualities reſide, may be ſaid *not to do Evil.* But alas, there is a wide Difference betwixt not doing Evil, and *doing Good*; the latter being a *poſitive Character* which can ariſe from nothing leſs, than the Love and Practice of *Vertue* and *true Goodneſs*, as above deſcribed.

SAINT

SAINT *Paul*'s Remark is very much to my preſent Purpoſe. *Rom.* v. 7. ſaith he, *Scarcely for a righteous Man will one die; yet peradventure for a good Man, ſome would even dare to die.* The Apoſtle here diſtinguiſhes betwixt a *righteous Man*, and a *good Man*: And he obſerves, with regard to the former, who by his juſt Behaviour, in anſwering every legal Demand, had entitled himſelf to the Character of a *righteous Man*, for *ſuch a Man* one would ſcarce die; his Life had nothing valuable in it, to render it *worthy* of ſuch a Ranſom: for tho he did no Evil, yet as he did no Good, he was but a ſort of Cypher in the Creation. But then the Apoſtle obſerves, with regard to the latter, who by his doing good to all around him, and who by communicating his kind Aſſiſtance and Protection to all that ſtood in need of his Help, had entitled himſelf to the Character of a *good Man*; that tho Life is exceeding dear to every Man, yet for *ſuch a one*, ſome would even dare to die. His Life was of ſuch Conſequence to the good and happineſs of Mankind, that ſome would even venture to *ranſom* it with the *Loſs* of their own.

WOULD we then be valuable Creatures, and would we deſerve the Character of good Men? let us put on the Spirit and Practice of Vertue, and true Goodneſs, as aforeſaid;

aforeſaid; and that will moſt certainly entitle us to it. But to proceed,

SECONDLY, I am to repreſent to my Reader, what it is which conſtitutes *true Religion*, or what it is he muſt be and do to render himſelf truly acceptable, and well-pleaſing to God. And here, I think, I have no great Difficulty upon my hands; becauſe this is what lies open to the View of every Man.

WE need not run from Sect to Sect, nor from one religious Teacher to another; we need not ranſack Hiſtory, nor be at the tedious Search of examining all the Evidence which every Miſſionary offers, to prove his Meſſage to be divine; nor turn over all the numberleſs Volumes which have been written by each religious Party, to prove or explain what they call the Word of God. No, *the Word* (to ſpeak in the Language of Saint *Paul*) *is nigh us, even in our Mouth, and in our Heart.* It is but to exerciſe that *reaſoning* Capacity which is lodged in the Boſom of every Man; and this will enable us to diſcover with *Eaſe* and *Certainty*, what we muſt be and do to pleaſe God.

IF I was to ſerve a Maſter, whom I knew to be of a covetous Temper of Mind; who made his *worldly Intereſt* the Rule and Meaſure of his Actions; in ſuch a Caſe, I ſhould not need a Teacher to inform me what

I muſt do to pleaſe him: This the Nature of the Thing would eaſily diſcover. If I could bend my Mind to his avaritious Temper, and could lay out myſelf in proſecuting his worldly Intereſt to the utmoſt of my Power; then I might know that my Service would be acceptable to him.

IN like manner, when we know that God is in reality a *wiſe* and a *good Being*, &c. then we cannot be at a loſs to know what we muſt be and do to pleaſe him. The Nature of the Thing ſhews us plainly, that if we have the *ſame Temper of Mind*, and govern our Actions by the *ſame Rule* as God does, then we ſhall not fail of his Favour; it being morally impoſſible, that it ſhould be otherwiſe. Heaven and Earth may fail and paſs away, but God will not fail of *loving* and *approving* ſuch Creatures, and of *diſapproving* their contrarys.

WOULD we then propoſe the Queſtion, *viz.* wherein conſiſts true Religion; and would we ſeek for Satisfaction in a way in which we might be certain not to miſtake? Let us take a View of our Creator when conſidered in his *moral* Capacity, and let us turn our Thoughts upon our ſelves, and examine what ſort of Creatures we are, how we are *conſtituted* and *circumſtanced*, and how we ſtand naturally *related* to God and to our fellow-Creatures; and then we may diſcover with Eaſe and Certainty

tainty what it is which God expects from us, and which will make us approveable in his Sight.

ARE we derived dependent Beings, endowed with a reaſoning Capacity to *direct* and *guide* our Behaviour; owing our ſelves, and all that we are or have, to that beſt of Beings, who is our *Creator*, and *original Benefactor*? This we cannot but know, if we exerciſe our reaſoning Capacity as aforeſaid; and then we cannot but know likewiſe, that it is *meet*, *right*, and our *bounden Duty*, upon all proper Occaſions, to awaken in our ſelves, and ſtir up in others, a due and a ſuitable ſenſe of our Creator, of his kind Intentions towards us, and of the many Favours we have received at his hand; and with a ſincere Affection offer up to him our humble and thankful Acknowledgments. Again,

ARE we ſocial Creatures, endowed with a reaſoning Capacity as aforeſaid, whom Nature hath fitted out to give and receive all that *kind Aſſiſtance* and *Protection* to, and from each other, that each other's Circumſtances and Abilitys make neceſſary and call for? Which ſurely we cannot but know, if we turn our Thoughts upon our ſelves, and upon the reſt of our fellow Creatures: And then we cannot but know likewiſe, that it is *right* and *fit* in the Nature of the Thing, that we ſhould introduce as much Happineſs

Happineſs into the Creation as we can, by rendering ourſelves the moſt *agreeable*, and the moſt *uſeful* Members of Society, that we are capable of being.

WE cannot but know, if we reflect as aforeſaid, that when we live under a ſuitable Senſe of the *Divine Kindneſs*, and pay our Acknowledgments to God, in a way which is moſt expreſſive of his *Excellency* and *Goodneſs*; and when, by an humble, meek, affable and courteous Behaviour, we have rendered our ſelves agreeable to all around us; and by the Exerciſe of Love and Pity, and a kind Aſſiſtance, we have removed the *Uneaſineſs*, and contributed to the *Happineſs* of our fellow-Creatures, as far as it has been in our power: I ſay, as we cannot but know, that ſuch a Temper and Conduct is *highly valuable* in itſelf, and *becoming us* as Men; ſo we cannot but know, that it will render us truly *acceptable* and *well-pleaſing* to God.

THIS, in ſhort, is true Religion. This is filling up that Relation we ſtand in to God, and to our fellow-Creatures; and anſwering the wiſe and good Purpoſe of our Creator, in calling us into Being. And therefore it is this, and this only, which in the Nature of the Thing, can, and will render us approveable in his ſight. This is what approves it ſelf to the Underſtanding of all Men: and yet it is thought by ſome, that

there is not any thing more difficult to *diſcover*, nor repreſented as more *myſterious*, than true Religion: tho by the way, this reflects *Diſhonour* upon the *Divine Conduct*, as if God had made the way to his Favour ſo exceeding *difficult*, that none but Men of *Letters* and *large Abilitys* could diſcover it; and had left the reſt of Mankind in their hands, to guide them right or wrong, as they pleaſe, in a matter of ſuch Importance.

IF true Religion was a *precarious* Thing, and founded upon the arbitrary Will of God, then indeed, as nothing but a *Revelation* of that Will could diſcover it, ſo it might be delivered in ſuch a way, as to leave room for *Diſpute*, and Men might be under perpetual Doubts and Fears about it. And the moſt that could be done in ſuch a Caſe, would be a *diligent* and *ſincere* Endeavour to know the Divine Will, and an *honeſt practiſing* what, upon ſuch Enquiry, appeared to be ſo; and then to truſt to the *Mercy* and *Goodneſs* of its Author for Acceptance, tho even ſuch a Conduct could not afford a proper Foundation for *Comfort* and *Satisfaction*; becauſe the wiſeſt and beſt Behaviour may not prevail for Acceptance with a Being, whoſe Actions are not directed by the moral Fitneſs of Things, but by arbitrary Pleaſure as aforeſaid: at leaſt, we can have no Aſſurance that it will.

BUT

BUT this is by no means the Caſe: True Religion, or that Duty we owe to our Creator, and to our fellow-Creatures, and which is the Ground of Divine Acceptance, being nothing elſe, but the *acting agreeably* to that Relation we ſtand in to God, and to each other; the Obligation to which, ariſes not from an arbitrary Command, but from the moral Fitneſs of Things.

WOULD we then be truly religious? that is, would we find Favour and Acceptance with our Maker? This is the only and the certain way to it, *viz.* To put on ſuch a *Temper of Mind*, and ſuch a *Behaviour* as becomes us as Men; and then we ſhall moſt certainly find *Favour* with God.

THERE is not any thing but *Agreeableneſs* in the Subject, which can poſſibly make it the Object of Divine Favour. For tho Men, from a miſtaken Judgment, or from viciated Affections, may be led to love that which is the proper Object of their Hatred, and diſlike that which in the Nature of the Thing is the proper Object of their Approbation; yet this cannot be the Caſe with reſpect to God; becauſe, as his Underſtanding cannot be *miſled*, ſo there is not any thing in Nature, which can poſſibly *viciate* his Affections. And if this be the Caſe, then certainly it becomes us all to put on ſuch a *Lovelineſs*, that is, ſuch an agreeable uſeful Temper and Conduct; as will in

the Nature of the Thing, render us truly *amiable* and *lovely* in the Eyes of our Maker; and not to flatter our ſelves that we are Sharers in Divine Love, whilſt our diſagreeable Tempers and Actions render us the proper Objects of Divine Diſpleaſure.

LET us not then deceive ourſelves in a matter of ſuch Importance, by making that the Ground of Divine Acceptance, which does not in the Nature of the Thing entitle us to it. It is not a *ſtrong Aſſent* to the Truth of a Propoſition, built upon a *Divine Teſtimony*; nor a *conſtant* and *ſerious* Attendance upon Ceremonys, tho of *Divine* Appointment; nor the being *united* to this, or that religious Party; much leſs an *angry* and *bitter Zeal*, ſpent in defending and propagating the Opinions we embrace, or the Party we are united to: I ſay, it is not theſe which can poſſibly render us *agreeable* to ſuch a wiſe and good Being as God is. That, in the Nature of the Thing, muſt ariſe from the Agreeableneſs of our *Tempers* and *Actions*, conſidering our Frame and Compoſition.

NEITHER will God be any ways *bribed* into a Liking and Approbation of us, whilſt in our Tempers and Actions we continue to be diſagreeable. It is not the offering to him *Thouſands of Rams*, nor *ten Thouſands of Rivers of Oyl*, nor the *Watchings* and *Faſtings*, the *Prayers* and *Tears* of

of a Man's ſelf, nor the *Labours*, nor *Sufferings*, nor the *Intreatys* of another in his Behalf; which can poſſibly render a diſagreeable Creature pleaſing to, and acceptable to his Maker. For tho Mens Affections may be *bribed* or *betrayed*; yet ſurely this cannot be the Caſe with reſpect to God; who is ſet far above every *Weakneſs* of every kind: and conſequently there is not any Thing but *perſonal Vertuouſneſs*, which can ſecure to a Man the Divine Favour.

The Sum of the Matter is this. Man is an intelligent free Agent, excellently conſtituted for ſocial Felicity, (as I have before ſhewn;) and when under a grateful Sen e of Divine Kindneſs, he ſtudies to imitate his Maker, in communicating Happineſs to all as far as it is in his power, by rendering himſelf agreeable and uſeful to the reſt of his fellow-Creatures; and by endeavouring to make them happy, as well as himſelf; then it is that he commences a *lovely Creature*, and muſt *approve* himſelf to God. And the more or leſs he is of this, or of the contrary, the more or leſs he is *lovely* or *diſagreeable* to his Maker. But,

POSSIBLY it may be urged, that the Principles I have laid down, are inconſiſtent with *Divine Revelation*, and deſtructive of all *revealed Religion*, and the like.

TO

TO which it may be anſwered, that it is not ſo. I have only been ſhewing what it is in the Nature of the Thing, that will certainly recommend Men to *God's Favour*. To which I here add, that the Buſineſs of Divine Revelation is not to make or conſtitute Duty, but to *declare* it; and to propoſe ſuch Arguments and Motives, as are proper to reduce Men to, and engage them in the *love* and *practice* of it. If Men had followed Nature, and acted upon Reaſon, according to our Saviour's juſt Remark, then there had been no need of Revelation. *They that are whole* (ſaith he) *have no need of the Phyſician*, (and conſequently have no need of Phyſick) *but they that are ſick. I came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance*, Mark ii. 17. But,

SUCH has been the Misfortune of the Generality of Mankind, that partly by a *wrong Education*, and partly by other Cauſes, their original Conſtitutions have been depraved: that is, their Underſtandings have been *miſled*, and their Appetites and Affections *vitiated*; and they have been ſo far from making the moral Fitneſs of Things the Rule and Meaſure of their Actions, that on the contrary, they have ſuffered themſelves to be governed by *Humour*, *private Intereſt*, and the like; and have eaſily ſubmitted to the arbitrary Commands of every one, who has declared himſelf a *heavenly* Meſſenger;

Meſſenger: inſomuch that cruel and hurtful, as well as childiſh and trifling Superſtitions, have been zealouſly contended for as true Religion. And,

THAT this has been the State of the *religious World*, I preſume will not be denied. The proper Queſtion then, ariſing from hence will be, (taking in the State and Condition of Mankind) whether there is a *moral Fitneſs* or *Unfitneſs* in God's interpoſing to diſcover to his Creatures ſuch Rules of Action, as are ſuitable to, and becoming their rational and manly Nature; and to repreſent to them the certain Conſequences of a good or bad Life, with regard to his Favour or Diſpleaſure? I ſay, the proper Queſtion is, whether there is a moral Fitneſs or Unfitneſs in God's interpoſing as aforeſaid?

IF there is a *moral Unfitneſs* in ſuch a Conduct, then I allow the Conſequence, *viz.* That no *Divine Revelation* can poſſibly take place upon my Principles. But on the other ſide, if there is a *moral Fitneſs* in God's interpoſing to give a Revelation to his Creatures as aforeſaid; then I ſay, the Principles I have laid down, are ſo far from being *prejudicial* to Divine Revelation, that on the contrary, they afford the moſt *concluſive* Argument for it.

IF it ſhould be farther urged. Allowing the foregoing Principles are conſiſtent with Divine Revelation; yet they muſt conclude againſt

againſt all *poſitive Inſtitutions* which have no moral Fitneſs in them, but are founded on the arbitrary Command of the Almighty.

BEFORE I reply, I beg leave to repeat what I have already obſerved in the *Supplement* to my *Previous Queſtion*, namely, "That in order to judge aright of the moral Fitneſs or Unfitneſs of any Action, every Circumſtance and Conſequence which ſtands related to it, muſt be taken into the Caſe; becauſe the Fitneſs or Unfitneſs of an Action, ariſes from the good or bad Purpoſes it is ſubſervient to. And theſe oftentimes ariſe, from the different Circumſtances the Action is performed under; ſo that the ſame Action may be fit under ſome Circumſtances, and unfit under others." Again,

I OBSERVE, Experience ſhews, that the Generality of Mankind are *diſpoſed* to, and much *affected* with Ceremony and external Obſervances; which, like Words, ſerve to *excite* and *expreſs*, not only the Conceptions, but the Paſſions of the Mind: And theſe they make uſe of not only in their ordinary Intercourſe with each other, but alſo in their *ſolemn Addreſſes* and *Application* to God: And Men vary in the uſe of theſe, ſome uſing one, ſome another, ſome applying to them one Signification, ſome another, according to the different Uſages or Opinions of the Ages, or Countrys in which Men live, or the different religious

Parties they are joined with, or the different ways of Thinking, which by their Education or ſome other Accident, they have been led into. Again,

I OBSERVE, That as Ceremonies are ſometimes *ſubſervient* to Mens *good*, by leading them to *proper Reflections*, and by exciting in them *good Affections*; ſo they are more frequently ſubſervient to the contrary, by bringing men under the Yoke of *burdenſome* and *hurtful Superſtitions*; by occaſioning in them a *bitter Zeal* againſt their fellow Creatures, when their Opinion and Practice, with reſpect to theſe, run croſs to each other; and by *miſleading* them with regard to *true Religion*; Mens Attendance on, and Zeal for Ceremonys, being frequently put in the place of *Vertue*, and made the *Ground* of Divine Acceptance. Theſe Things being premiſed,

I ANSWER, The proper Queſtion in this Caſe will be, taking in the ſtate of Mankind, how much they are *diſpoſed* to external Obſervances, and how *liable* they are to make a *bad uſe* of them. I ſay, the Queſtion is, when all Circumſtances and Conſequences are taken into the Caſe, Whether it is *morally fit* or *unfit* for God to interpoſe, by appointing ſome Ceremonys (which are leaſt burdenſom) as the Marks of our Reſpect to him; to preſerve Peace and Unity amongſt Mankind, to lead us to

Vertue, and to prevent our running into more burdenſom and hurtful Superſtitions.

SO that, before any Conſequence can be fairly drawn from the Principles I have laid down, either for or againſt Divine Revelation, or poſitive Inſtitutions, this Point muſt firſt be cleared; *viz.* That it is either morally fit, or unfit, for God to interpoſe in the Caſe referred to.

UPON the whole I obſerve, that God does not *command* for *commanding ſake*, or by way of *Tax* upon his Creatures; but on the contrary, all his Commands and Inſtitutions are intended for our good. And it is when that End is anſwered, that they become *uſeful* to us, and we become *acceptable* to God: And therefore the bare Compliance with, yea the moſt fervent Zeal for *Ceremonys* and *divine Inſtitutions*, when ſeparated from the Love and Practice of Vertue, cannot make us the proper Objects of divine regard. This is evident from the Nature of the Thing, to which I ſhall add the following Teſtimonys.

MICAH vi. 6, 7, 8. *Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt Offerings, with Calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleaſed with Thouſands of Rams, or with ten Thouſands of Rivers of Oyl? Shall I give my firſt-born for my Tranſgreſſion, the Fruit of my Body*

Body for the Sin of my Soul? He hath ſhewn thee, O Man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do juſtly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

ISAIAH i. 11—17. *To what purpoſe is the Multitude of your Sacrifices to me, ſaith the Lord? I am full of the burnt Offering of Rams, and of the Fat of fed Beaſts; and I delight not in the Blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of he-Goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands to tread my Courts? Bring no more vain Oblations, Incenſe is an Abomination unto me, the new Moons and Sabbaths, the calling of Aſſemblies I cannot away with, it is Iniquity, even the ſolemn Meeting. Your new Moons, and your appointed Feaſts my Soul hateth: They are a Trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them. And when you ſpread forth your Hands, I will hide mine Eyes from you: And when you make many Prayers, I will not hear; your Hands are full of Blood. Waſh ye, make you clean, put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes; ceaſe to do Evil, learn to do well, ſeek Judgment, relieve the Oppreſſed, judge the Fatherleſs, plead for the Widow.*

IN fine, Divine Revelation muſt, when *rightly* underſtood, be conſiſtent with Nature; and conſequently, what I have fairly

deduced from the Reaſon of Things, cannot be *prejudicial* to it, nor to revealed Religion founded upon it.

THUS I have gone thro' what I propoſed. I ſhall now cloſe up this Subject with the following Remark; namely, That as having *right Notions* of the Deity, when conſidered in his moral Capacity, is the Ground and Foundation of all *true Religion*; ſo the having a *wrong* and *unworthy* Idea of God, when conſidered in that ſame Capacity, is the Foundation of all *religious Superſtition*, whether exerciſed in Mens Paſſions or Actions. For

AS religious Superſtition, with regard to our Paſſions, conſiſts in exerciſing our *Hopes* and *Fears* with reſpect to God, when there is no juſt Ground for the Exerciſe of them; ſo thoſe Hopes and Fears naturally ſpring from a *falſe Notion* of the Deity, with regard to his moral Character. When we ſuppoſe ſuch a *Temper of Mind* in our Creator as he is a Stranger to, and when we conſider him as governing his Actions by ſuch *Rules* as he is the fartheſt from; as ſuch an unworthy Conception of God will naturally alarm our *Paſſions*, ſo all thoſe Hopes and Fears which ariſe from, and are founded upon it, will be exceedingly *ſuperſtitious* and *groundleſs*.

THE Caſe is the ſame with reſpect to Mens Actions. For when they have form

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ed in their Minds a wrong and unworthy Idea of God, with regard to the moral Rectitude of his Nature, then they are *ſuperſtitiouſly* led upon that account to do many Things as *Duty*, and to avoid many others as *Sins*, when there is no *juſt Ground* nor Foundation for either. And the more groſs and unworthy Mens Conceptions of God are in this reſpect, the more *groſs* and *vile* will that Superſtition be, which is produced by it.

WHEN Men conſider God as an *abſolute Sovereign*, whoſe Actions are directed not by the Fitneſs of Things, but by arbitrary Pleaſure, and that he will reſpect Men more for the *Orthodoxy* of their Opinions, or for their *Attendance* on and *Zeal* for this or that Ceremony, and the like, than for the *Sweetneſs* of their Tempers, or the *Vertuouſneſs* of their Lives; and that he hates and will puniſh Men for their *innocent Miſtakes* concerning himſelf, or the Service they are to pay to him: As ſuch an Opinion is very wrong in itſelf, and diſhonourable to the Deity, ſo Men are eaſily and naturally led by it, to think that *religious Perſecution* is pleaſing to God; this being (in their way of thinking) a Conformity to the *Divine Pattern*, in hating and puniſhing thoſe, whom they think God hates and will puniſh. And thus a falſe and unworthy Opinion of the Deity, with regard to his moral

moral Character, will lead Men to Actions which are moſt *injurious* to Mankind, and moſt *diſhonourable* and *hateful* to God.

OUR Saviour ſaid to his Diſciples, as in *John* xvi. 2. *They* (viz. the *Jews*) *ſhall put you out of the Synagogues: Yea the Time cometh, that whoſoever killeth you, will think that he doth God ſervice. And theſe Things will they do unto you, becauſe they have not known the Father, nor me.* In theſe Words our Lord obſerves, that Mens religious Superſtition would lead them to the killing of God's Servants, out of Zeal for his Honour. He likewiſe obſerves, that the Ground of this ſuperſtitious Zeal, is their *Ignorance* and *falſe Notions* of the Deity; which Ignorance muſt relate to him with regard to his moral Character, as afore-ſaid.

THE *Jews* Ignorance of God could not relate to his natural Character; becauſe they had as *juſt Ideas* of him in that reſpect, as the Chriſtians. Neither could their Ignorance of this kind, (ſuppoſing they had been juſtly chargeable) be productive of ſuch *Barbaritys* as our Lord ſaid they would be guilty of. A wrong Opinion of God's natural Propertys, his Perſonality and the like, cannot, in the Nature of the Thing, lay a Foundation for thinking that religious Perſecution is *pleaſing to God*; and conſequently cannot have any ſuch Influence upon Mens

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Temſpers and *Actions*, as was the Caſe with reſpect to the *Jews* before-mentioned.

THESE *Jews* conſidered God as an abſolute Sovereign, the Ground of whoſe Favour or Diſpleaſure is not the perſonal Vertuouſneſs or Viciouſneſs of his Creatures, but their ſubmitting or not ſubmitting to what he *arbitrarily* makes the Conditions of his Acceptance. They likewiſe conſider themſelves as thoſe who had the good Fortune to be ſingled out for *Divine Love*: That God had from mere ſovereign Pleaſure, made them *his People*: That he had given them the only and the certain Conditions of his *Favour*, and that he had excluded the reſt of Mankind from any ſhare in his Affections. And as theſe were the unworthy Ideas they had of God and of his Conduct; ſo they were very eaſily led to conclude from them, that the *afflicting* and *grieving*, and even *killing* thoſe whom they preſumed God had prepared for Deſtruction, would be a Sacrifice acceptable, and well-pleaſing to him. *The Time cometh, that whoſoever killeth you will think that he doth God ſervice. And theſe Things will they do unto you, becauſe they have not known the Father, nor me.*

I WILL only add, that to know, or have a juſt Idea of God with regard to his moral Character, is the *moſt noble* and the moſt *uſeful Knowledg*, which the Mind of Man can be furniſhed with. To know God

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in his natural Capacity, that is, to know him with regard to his metaphyſical Nature or Eſſence, his Perſonality, his natural Propertys, ſuch as neceſſary Exiſtence, Immenſity, and the like; ſuch Knowledg may make us *good Philoſophers*, and that is the moſt it can poſſibly do. But to know God in his moral Capacity, this may make us *good Men*, as it is capable of having a powerful Influence upon our Minds and Lives, by diſpoſing us to model them after the *Divine Pattern*, and to render our ſelves the *ſuitable* and *proper* Objects of his Approbation and Affection.

I am, SIR,

Your Obliged

Humble Servant, &c.